

Chapter 30

What Happened to ‘Strangeness in Quark-Gluon Plasma: 1982’

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Due to mishaps, the following manuscript Chap. 31 did not appear in the proceedings of the QM2 meeting in Bielefeld, 10–14 May, 1982. It seems appropriate to show in this volume how things worked and what obstacles needed to be overcome in a new field of research that was recently born and rapidly advancing. The science policy decisions to be taken meant that 1–2 weeks were important, while a document could take as long as 4 weeks to travel between Geneva and Frankfurt.

The lectures given at the QM2 meeting play an important role in the report made by Maurice Jacob on 22 June 1982 to the CERN Scientific Policy Committee, see Chap. 29. Looking at the actual CERN SPC meeting protocol prepared the end of June 1982, one sees that Maurice’s own QM2 contribution was not available but in first typed draft, with hand-drawn figures.

The story of my displaced manuscript: I left it behind in the care of a trusted student in Frankfurt, and I believed that my instructions were that upon final corrections in one-two days my contribution would be sent straight to Maurice Jacob at CERN. However, Mr. Günther Staadt felt uneasy submitting what I had not seen and on Wednesday, 14 July, 1982, translated from German, he wrote:

Enclosed you will find, as desired, a copy of your typed and corrected work, “Strangeness in Quark-Gluon-Plasma.” Everything here is in order. As soon as the fifth chapter of your book is finished, I will send you a copy. I wish you a continued pleasant stay in America.

I was in Seattle. I reviewed the manuscript and after one small white-out change I sent it off the same day to CERN, with the note to Maurice Jacob:

Dear Maurice, I hope that you can enclose this late manuscript, “Strangeness in Quark-Gluon Plasma” into the proceedings of the Bielefeld meeting, Sincerely yours, Johann, PS
Till 13 August in Seattle, from Sept 4th at Frankfurt

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After I was already back a letter from Maurice Jacob dated and stamped at CERN on 12 August, 1982 arrived on 8 September, taking 4 weeks from Geneva to reach my mail bin in Frankfurt:

Dear Johann, Thank you very much for your letter and your manuscript. However even though your letter is dated "July" I received it only today (12 August, 1982) when everything is already in Singapore.

Since the Bertocci's session report was in an unsettled stage until the last minute I am forwarding your paper to Helmut who had straightened out the matter after discussing things with Bertocci. While there may still be time to include your contribution I am very much afraid it could already be very – too – late.

I remember calling Bielefeld that day and talking to a secretary. She had the contents of the book on her desk and informed me that my paper was not in proceedings. This conference paper was half review of published work and in part new and original with many ideas. This is a typical conference, and less typical manuscript to be submitted to a refereed journal. So what was I to do? I gave a copy of the manuscript to my friend John W. Clark who happened to visit just at the time of the call to Bielefeld. On 4 October, 1982 he wrote back:

Dear Jan, I turned (2 copies of) your paper "Strangeness in Quark-Gluon Plasma" over to Manuel de Llano, who will present it to the editor of KINAM. However, a cover letter stating explicitly that the paper is submitted for publication in KINAM will be needed. Please address the letter to ...

After more lost mail (!) KINAM wrote on 2 March, 1983 by surface mail:

I am glad to inform you that your paper ... has been recommended for publication after revision. Please find enclosed the referee's comments.

The request of the referee was justified: I had to either make this a review, or a research paper. I hand-wrote a response on 4 May, 1983:

Regret that in view of the enclosed review I am unable to satisfy the demands of the referee and withdraw the paper.

I presented the story as an anecdote when traveling in South Africa, and found sympathetic ears. The submission letter sent on 11 May, 1983 from Cape Town to Professor Chris Engelbrecht, the editor of the South African Journal of Physics reads:

The enclosed manuscript 'Strangeness in Quark-Gluon Plasma' was prepared some months ago with the intention that it should appear in proceedings of the Bielefeld Workshop, as mentioned on the first page. Unfortunately, it had arrived too late to be included in these proceedings. Aside from reviewing work published in Refs. 4, 11 (enclosed for your information) it also contains quantitative discussion of strangeness as a signal for plasma formation (Section 4) not available elsewhere. I would be delighted if you decide to publish this manuscript in your journal.

The reception date by publishers was 16 May, 1983. Note how well, in comparison, the mail in South Africa worked.

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